

Peachtree Center Tour Notes

Peachtree Center

District located in Downtown Atlanta, Georgia. Most of the structures that make up the district were designed by Atlanta architect John C. Portman, Jr.. A defining feature of the Peachtree Center is a **network of enclosed pedestrian sky bridges** suspended above the street-level, which have garnered criticism for discouraging pedestrian street life. The district is served by the Peachtree Center MARTA station, providing access to rapid transit.

Intended to be the new downtown for Atlanta, Peachtree Center emerged as a distinct district in the **early 1970s** as a networked realm of convention hotels, shopping galleries, and office buildings a quarter-mile north of Five Points. Peachtree Center is notable for its uniform embodiment of the **modern architectural style** popular at the time. Yet the defining feature of Peachtree Center is its **insular orientation**, which allows patrons and workers to avoid interacting with the street level by traversing the area through sky bridges. By the mid-1980s, Peachtree Center had become the core of a dedicated hotel-convention district that lay at the heart of the Downtown economy, even as the remainder of Downtown Atlanta deteriorated markedly.

While at the time Peachtree Center was **considered the salvation of a decaying downtown Atlanta**, contemporary city planning is highly critical of such insular environments that "turn their back" on the city streets. Thus, as intown Atlanta began its post-1990 resurgence, Peachtree Center was increasingly criticized as an area that epitomized contemporary Atlanta's generic urbanity and sense of placelessness. Other critics claim that Peachtree Center is **disorienting, killed downtown street-life, and disregarded the existing urban context.**

The center was recognized for its architecture with listing on the **National Register** of Historic Places in **2018**.

Hyatt Regency Atlanta

Business hotel located on Peachtree Street in downtown Atlanta, Georgia. Opened in **1967** as the Regency Hyatt House, John C. Portman, Jr.'s **revolutionary 22-story atrium design** for the hotel has **influenced hotel design enormously** in the years since. The hotel instantly became one of the most recognized buildings in Atlanta.

The building consists of the main "Atrium Tower" and two extensions, completed in 1971 and 1982, respectively, containing a total of 1,260 rooms. On top of the Hyatt Regency is a revolving restaurant called **Polaris**, located just beneath the blue dome-shaped structure which gives the hotel its distinctive profile. This was Portman's **first designed revolving restaurant** of many. When the hotel first opened, the restaurant gave diners an ever-changing panoramic view of the entire city; however, as taller buildings were erected on all sides of the hotel, the restaurant's view became increasingly constricted. The Polaris closed in August 2004 and remained empty until renovation plans were approved in 2013. Polaris reopened in June 2014.

In 1971, the **Ivy Tower** (now called Radius Tower) was constructed, which was also designed by John Portman. It closely resembles his Westin Peachtree Plaza, which opened five years later. So similar are the two buildings that in 1981, the Tower doubled for the Peachtree Plaza in the film **Sharky's Machine**

starring Burt Reynolds. Stuntman Dar Robinson dropped (67 m (220 ft)) from the Tower, setting a record for the highest freefall (unrestrained) jump from a building in a film. In 1969, Jim Morrison, lead singer of The Doors, stayed at the Hyatt Regency Atlanta while attending the Atlanta Film Festival. At the awards ceremony, he gave his room key to the woman presenting him the plaque.

In 1982, the International Tower was added, which is the same as the original design but has expanded rooms and suites.

Atlanta Marriott Marquis

53-story, (554.0 ft) Marriott hotel in Atlanta, Georgia. It is the 14th tallest skyscraper in the city. The building was designed by Atlanta architect John C. Portman, Jr. with construction completed in 1985, and because of its bulging base, it is often referred to as the "Pregnant Building" or the "Coca Cola" building as it looks like a bottle of Coke from the side elevation.

One of the defining features of the Marriott Marquis is its large atrium. It was the largest in the world upon its completion in 1985, at 470 feet (143 m) high. The atrium spans the entire height of the building and consists of two vertical chambers divided by elevator shafts and bridges. The record was later broken by the Burj Al Arab in Dubai.

The 42nd floor features a concierge lounge that is only open to guests staying on the 42nd through the 47th floors.

In the films *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* and *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Part 1*, some scenes of the Capitol's tribute center were filmed here. Some scenes of the 2012 movie *Flight* were shot in the hotel as well. The atrium is also seen briefly in the 1986 movie *Manhunter*.

SunTrust Plaza

A (869 ft) 60 story skyscraper in downtown Atlanta. Built as part of the Peachtree Center complex, construction was finished in 1992, and has been the second-tallest building in Atlanta since then. When completed, it was the 28th tallest building in the world, and 21st tallest building in the United States. Since Atlanta's tallest, the Bank of America Plaza, is located in nearby Midtown, SunTrust Plaza is the tallest in the downtown area. The light rotates.

Architect and developer John C. Portman, Jr. originally conceived this building in the 1980s commercial real-estate frenzy as a speculative office building. Its basic design elements, a postmodern square tower with an elaborate base and crown, represented a departure for Portman from his earlier International-style work, and are said to have been inspired by Philip Johnson's wildly successful design for midtown Atlanta's One Atlantic Center.

Ground broke in 1989 with great fanfare, but by completion in 1992, the bottom had fallen out of Atlanta's real estate market and the building sat largely empty, nearly forcing Portman into bankruptcy and causing him to lose control of most of his real estate holdings. His architectural firm, John Portman & Associates, located their headquarters in the building.

In the mid-1990s, Portman sold half his interest in the building to SunTrust Bank, which then moved its headquarters to the building, prompting a name change from One Peachtree Center to its current name.

The two-level lobby is filled with many works of art, sculpture and furniture designed by John Portman.

Carnegie Education Pavilion

More often known as the Carnegie Monument, is a marble Beaux-Arts monument located in Atlanta, Georgia, United States. The pavilion was constructed in 1996 from the exterior facade of the Carnegie Library, named after Andrew Carnegie. The monument pays homage to the legacy of Carnegie by serving as a monument to higher education in Atlanta, with the seals of nine local area colleges and universities embedded in the floor of the monument. The monument was commissioned in 1996 by the Corporation for Olympic Development in Atlanta and designed by Henri Jova. The pavilion is located in Downtown's Hardy Ivy Park, at the curve in Peachtree Street where it intersects with Baker Street. The monument's inscription reads: "The Advancement of Learning." It also features the inscriptions of the names of three famous Western poets "Dante", "Milton", and "Asop", in addition to the library's namesake, "Carnegie"

From 1899 to 1901, Andrew Carnegie, the steel magnate and philanthropist from Pittsburgh, donated \$145,000 to construct, furnish, and supply a new public library in Atlanta. A site was chosen at 126 Carnegie Way in downtown Atlanta. The library, built by New York architects Ackerman and Ross, opened in 1902. It was renovated in 1950 and 1966, and remained the central library of the system until it was demolished in 1977 in order to make way for the controversial Marcel Breuer-designed Central Library. The architectural bays of the original structure were preserved and used to create the pavilion twenty years after the building's demolition.

Centennial Olympic Park

21-acre (85,000 m²) public park located in downtown Atlanta, Georgia owned and operated by the Georgia World Congress Center Authority. It was built by the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG) as part of the infrastructure improvements for the 1996 Summer Olympics. It plays host to millions of visitors a year and several events, including a summer popular music concert series (Wednesday WindDown) and an annual Independence Day concert and fireworks display.

The park property was previously a variety of vacant lots and abandoned or run-down industrial buildings. ACOG's chief executive, Billy Payne, conceived it as both a central gathering location for visitors and spectators during the Olympics and as a lasting legacy for the city. With the park being the showcase to the world during the Olympics, ACOG decided to hold a design competition to lay out and build the park. Architect EDAW, with the joint construction team of Beers/Russell, were selected to design and build the park by the Georgia World Congress Center Authority. Centennial Olympic Park was constructed in two phases. Phase I of construction was completed July 1996, just in time for 1996 Olympic Summer Games at a cost of US\$28 million. During the Olympics, the park contained sponsor exhibits, hosted entertainment and medal presentations, and was a hotbed for pin trading. Phase II construction took place shortly after the Olympics were over and was completed during the following year, in 1998, at the cost of US\$15 million.

The celebrations in the park were marred by the July 27 bombing which killed two people (one from a heart attack) and injured 111 others. Security at the park and at all sporting venues was subsequently

raised to include bag searches and metal detectors at all entrances. The bombing site is adjacent to the Park's "Centennial Tree". It was closed shortly after the Olympics for renovations (including installation of grass) until spring 1998.

On March 14, 2008, the park sustained minor damage when a tornado tore through downtown Atlanta. Two of the 65 foot (20 m) tall light towers were blown down. It was the first tornado to hit the downtown area since weather record keeping began in the 1880s.

On July 16, 2016, the park held events commemorating the 20th anniversary of the 1996 Olympics and Paralympics, including a volunteer reunion, concessions, and a fireworks show. In November, a commemorative plaque honoring the Games was unveiled.

A key feature of the park is the Fountain of Rings interactive fountain which features computer-controlled lights and jets of water synchronized with music played from speakers in light towers surrounding it. It forms a splash pad that was designed for children to frolic in, as well as for concert-goers and joggers to cool off in on hot summer days. It consists of 251 jets that shoot 12 to 35 feet (3.7 to 10.7 m) in the air, and also creates a beautiful water sculpture that is essentially the front yard of the nearby museum. An important formal architectural landmark that is also a fun and playful space, the computer controlled fountain concept has since been replicated in other urban designs such as Dundas Square in Toronto and in commercial uses such as the Bellagio Fountains at the Bellagio Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Water feature at the Park

The fountain area is surrounded by flags representing the host countries of each Summer Olympics preceding the 1996 games and eight 65-foot-tall (20 m) light towers reminiscent of classical Greek marker columns. There are several pieces of sculpture scattered through the park including a statue of Pierre de Coubertin, father of the modern Olympic movement. A small amphitheatre is located at the southern end of the park.

The park has shows at the fountain all 365 days of the year, four times daily. They play at 12:30 p.m., 3:30 p.m., 6:30 p.m., and 9:30 p.m.

SkyView Atlanta

In July 2013, SkyView Atlanta, a transportable Ferris wheel, debuted across the street from the park. The 200-foot (61 m) wheel features 42 air-conditioned cars and views of the park and the surrounding area.

Engraved bricks

The park was paid for in part by the donations of thousands of individuals who bought bricks engraved with the short message of their choice and laid as pavers throughout the park. The contribution for each brick was \$35. The message was allowed 15 characters on each of two lines. The finished bricks were laid in alternating light (tan) and dark (brick red) groups comprising a large portion of the 800,000 bricks used in the park's construction. Many contributors ordered replica bricks to keep for themselves as souvenirs.

Westin Peachtree Plaza

Skyscraper hotel on Peachtree Street in downtown Atlanta, Georgia adjacent to the Peachtree Center complex and the former Davison's/Macy's flagship store with 1073 rooms. At (723.0 ft) and 73 stories, a total building area of 1,196,240 sq.ft and a 57 m (187 ft) diameter, the tower is the fourth-tallest hotel in the Western Hemisphere, and the 23rd tallest all-hotel building in the world.

The first building on the site was the first official Georgia Governor's Mansion in Atlanta, a Victorian-style home purchased by the state in 1870 at the southwest corner of Peachtree Street and Cain Street (later International Boulevard, now Andrew Young International Boulevard). After housing 17 governors of Georgia (each limited to a single term of office) until 1921, it was demolished in 1923 for the Henry Grady Hotel, named for Atlanta Constitution newspaper journalist/magnate and philanthropist Henry W. Grady. That and the Roxy Theatre were in turn demolished for the current building.

Designed by developer/architect John Portman, the building gained landmark status within the city as Atlanta's tallest building from its completion, in 1976, to 1987 when it was overtaken by One Atlantic Center. The building opened as the tallest hotel in the world; in 1977, however, it was surpassed by its architectural twin, the central hotel tower of the Portman-designed Renaissance Center in Detroit. The Peachtree Plaza Hotel opened as the tallest building in the southeastern United States, surpassing One Shell Square in New Orleans. It lost that title in 1983, when the Southeast Financial Center in Miami surpassed it. It was the tallest building in downtown Atlanta for 13 years until it was surpassed by 191 Peachtree Tower, which in turn was surpassed by SunTrust Plaza (then One Peachtree Center).

The hotel was heavily featured in the 1981 film Sharky's Machine starring Burt Reynolds. Stuntman Dar Robinson, doubling for Henry Silva at the end of the film, dropped 220 feet from what appeared to be the Westin Peachtree Plaza, setting a record for the highest freefall (unrestrained) jump from a building in a film. In actuality, however, the stunt scene was filmed at the nearby Hyatt Regency Hotel, using its shorter but similar cylindrically-shaped Radius Tower.

The building is cast in reflective glass in a cylindrical shape that reflects much of the downtown skyline (though each of the around 5600 windows are flat and not convex). Another small cylinder runs the full height of the building on one side, and accommodates two scenic elevators. The uppermost floors hold the Sun Dial Restaurant and Bar, a revolving restaurant that offers panoramic views of the city and its environs. The top floor of the restaurant completes a full revolution every 30 minutes, and the bottom every 60 minutes.

When the building first opened in 1976, the seven-story tall lobby atrium rose out of a half-acre, fountain-filled indoor lake known as the "lagoon". The lobby bar was surrounded by large, oval "cocktail islands" which appeared to float on the lake and the entire area was decorated with tapestries, sculptures, cages with live birds and over 100 trees. According to a contemporary postcard, architect Portman designed this area "as a modern interpretation of a Venetian Plaza". In a newspaper advertisement, the hotel called the lobby "more like a park" and claimed it was "a total departure from any other you've ever seen."

Not everyone was impressed, however. In a humorous 1982 column dismissing the extravagance of modern hotel lobbies, George F. Will complained that "Atlanta's Peachtree Plaza has a lobby that Lewis and Clark could not have found their way across". He compared the "pond-like body of water" to "a Walden in everything but charm in which you can drown yourself, which you might wish to do".

Eventually, the lake was drained, and lobby redesigned as a more standard hotel gathering place with carpet, chairs and sofas.

The hotel was also notable for its Peachtree Ballroom, which was the largest in Atlanta when it opened, seating 3,500 people. It has since been surpassed by the Georgia International Convention Center, which lays claim to having the largest ballroom in the state of Georgia.

On March 14, 2008, the Westin, along with other neighboring skyscrapers, sustained moderate damage when a tornado tore through downtown Atlanta, with over 500 windows broken. It was the first tornado to have hit the downtown area. The building reportedly swayed back and forth about two feet (more than half a meter) in either direction, as it was designed.

By 2009, the Westin was the only building in Downtown Atlanta to have not replaced its broken windows, which instead were still covered with black-painted plywood on the outside, and drywall on the inside. This is because the ¼-inch (6mm) uninsulated glass was no longer made by PPG Industries, and even identical new windows would look mismatched because of weathering due to three decades of hot sunshine. Additionally, new building codes require insulated glass that can withstand winds up to 90 miles per hour (145 km/h) instead of 75 miles per hour (120 km/h), necessitating heavier and more expensive glass. Replacement of all 6,350 windows was expected to begin in June or July 2009 and continue from the top down until summer 2010 at a cost of over \$20 million. Like the original, the new windows are also mirrored, but feature a slight bronze tint. Each pane measures 52 in × 110 in (130 cm × 280 cm) and weighs 270 lb (120 kg) with four panes required for each room. More than 600 tons of glass were to be recycled.

Skanska completed the Westin Peachtree Plaza exterior window renovation in September 2010.[23] On November 9, 2010, renovation of the Sundial Restaurant at the top of the building was completed, repairing tornado damage done to it two years prior.

Winecoff Hotel Fire

December 7, 1946, was the deadliest hotel fire in United States history, killing 119 hotel occupants, including the hotel's owners. Located at 176 Peachtree Street in downtown Atlanta, Georgia, United States, the Winecoff Hotel was advertised as "absolutely fireproof". While the hotel's steel structure was indeed protected against the effects of fire, the hotel's interior finishes were combustible, and the building's exit arrangements consisted of a single stairway serving all fifteen floors. All of the hotel's occupants above the fire's origin on the third floor were trapped, and the fire's survivors either were rescued from upper-story windows or jumped into nets held by firemen. The fire was notable for the number of victims who jumped to their deaths. A photograph of one survivor's fall won the 1947 Pulitzer Prize for Photography. The fire – which followed the June 5, 1946, La Salle Hotel fire in Chicago (with 61 fatalities), and the June 19, 1946, Canfield Hotel fire in Dubuque, Iowa (with 19 fatalities) – spurred significant changes in North American building codes, most significantly requiring multiple protected means of egress and self-closing fire-resistive doors for guest rooms in hotels.

The Winecoff Hotel (now the Ellis Hotel) opened in 1913 as one of the tallest buildings in Atlanta. The steel-framed structure was built on a small lot measuring 62.75 feet by 70 feet, bounded by Peachtree Street, Ellis Street and an alley, with 4,386 square feet per floor. Guest rooms extended from the third to

the fifteenth floors, with fifteen rooms on a typical floor. Corridors on guest floors were arranged in an H-shape, with two elevators and the upward flights of stairs opening into the cross halls, and opposing downward runs of stairs converging on a single landing from the legs of the H. The single stairway, of non-combustible construction, was not enclosed with fire-resistant doors. While the use of multiple stairways was becoming common practice in tall buildings, the Atlanta Building Code of 1911 permitted buildings on lots of less than 5,000 square feet to have a single stairway. The steel structure was protected by structural clay tile and concrete fireproofing. The hotel was touted in advertisements and on its stationery as "absolutely fireproof".

Interior partitions, including the walls between corridors and guest rooms were hollow clay tile covered with plaster. Room doors were 1.5-inch wood, with movable transom panels above each door for ventilation between the rooms and the corridors, closed by a wood panel of less than .5 inches in thickness. The corridor walls were finished with painted burlap fabric extending up to wainscot height. Guest rooms were finished with as many as seven layers of wallpaper. The hotel had a central fire alarm system, manually operated from the front desk, and a standpipe with hose racks at each floor. There was no automatic sprinkler system.

The fire's point of origin was on the third-floor west hallway, where a mattress and chair had been temporarily placed in the corridor, close to the stairway to the fourth floor. One theory suggests that a dropped cigarette may have ignited the mattress or other combustibles in the corridor. The fire was first noticed about 3:15 a.m. by a bellboy who had gone to the fifth floor to help a guest and was trapped. However, the first (and only) call to the fire department was made at 3:42 a.m. by the night manager, who was reported to have attempted to warn guests by telephone of the fire. The building fire alarm was not sounded, although by that time no escape was possible from the upper floors in any case. A survivor recounted being awakened and made aware of the fire by the sound of people screaming. The first engine and ladder companies arrived within thirty seconds of the call. By that time people were already jumping from windows. Fire department ladders could extend only part way up the building, but many guests were rescued in this manner. Other people were rescued via ladders placed horizontally across the alley to an adjoining building.

Fire spread was initially hampered by the stair arrangement. While the stairs were not closed off by doors, the configuration placed ascending and descending runs around the corner from each other, keeping fire and hot gas from quickly ascending the stair. Fire did not spread through the enclosed elevator shafts, nor through the laundry or mail chutes. Open transoms between the rooms and the corridors admitted fresh air for combustion, eventually creating a flue-like effect with the fire climbing to all but the two top floors. Once established in the corridors, the fire fed on the burlap wallcoverings and ignited room doors and transoms. Doors and transoms were burned through on all but the fourteenth and fifteenth floors. Guests opened windows seeking fresh air and rescue, further enabling the draft of fresh air to the fire. The fire investigation revealed that an open transom was closely associated with the ignition of a given guest room and its contents.

Firefighters

Firefighters were hampered, and in some cases injured, by falling bodies. A number of guests tied bedsheets together and tried to descend. Others misjudged the ten-foot-wide alley between the rear of the Winecoff and the Mortgage Guaranty Building and attempted to jump across. The Atlanta Fire Department mustered 385 firefighters, 22 engine companies and 11 ladder trucks, four of which were

aerial ladder units, at the scene. A second alarm was sounded at 3:44 a.m. and a third at 3:49 a.m., with a general alarm (all available units respond, including off-duty personnel) at 4:02 a.m. Mutual aid from surrounding departments brought a total of 49 pieces of equipment. Firefighters climbed adjoining buildings to fight the fire and rescue guests, including the 12-story Mortgage Guaranty building across the 10-foot wide alley, and the six-story Davison-Paxon department store (later Macy's) on the opposite side of Ellis Street.

Of the 304 guests in the hotel that night, 119 died, about 65 were injured and about 120 were rescued uninjured. The hotel's original owners, the Winecoffs, who lived in an apartment in the hotel, died in the apartment. Thirty-two deaths were among those who jumped, or who fell while trying to descend ropes made of sheets tied together to reach the ground or too short fire ladders. Among the hotel guests were forty high school students on a State YMCA of Georgia ("Y" Clubs) sponsored trip to Atlanta for a state youth-in-government legislative program, thirty of whom died. The students had mostly been placed two to a room at the back of the hotel next to the alley, where many of the windows had been covered by louvered shutters for privacy. The occupants of the shuttered rooms were killed on every floor above the fifth floor.

Between \$3 million and \$4 million in claims were brought against the hotel's owners, but insurance awards totaled only about \$350,000.

Among the casualties were...

William Fleming Winecoff (age 76), the hotel's builder and namesake. He lived with his wife for 31 years in suite 1011–1012. He was found dead in a nearby hall.

Grace Smith Winecoff (age 76), the builder's wife. She died on the sidewalk of Peachtree Street.